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ABSTRACT

Men and women see themselves as contributing different types of resources to relationships. Women feel they contribute particularistic resources--resources directed toward particular persons; men feel they contribute universalistic resources--resources directed toward any occupant of some position. Men and women have accumulated very different experiences in responding to others as either persons or occupants of positions. Men prefer equity in relationships; women prefer equality in relationships. (PJC)

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Differences

A Theoretical Framework: Do men respond to positions and women to persons?

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Sex Differences in Equity

A Theoretical Framework: Do men respond to positions and women to persons?

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In keeping with the popular pessimism that social psychology makes better history than science, we will first simply describe the recorded differences in how men and women allocate resources. Then, we will ask the scientific question -- why do these differences appear? And finally we will present some data that add one more link to what we believe is the causal chain.

The accumulated literature on sex differences in equity and equality describes a general rule that has various translations. The general rule says that men and boys divide rewards equitably -- proportionally, according to merit -- while women and girls divide them equally -- regardless of differences in work, effort, or merit. (e.g. Leventhal & Lane, 1970; Leventhal & Anderson, 1970; Benton, 1971; Leventhal, 1973). We are convinced that these differences are reliable (at least for this day and age and culture). They also conform to many other findings about sex differences in negotiations and bargaining. Research on coalition formation (Vinacke & Gullickson, 1964; Uesugi & Vinacke, 1963; Vinacke, 1959) finds men more oriented toward competition and individual gain and women more oriented toward establishing good interpersonal relations, even at some cost to themselves. Vinacke calls these "exploitative" and "altruistic" strategies respectively. Harking back to the Parsonian distinction, social psychologists have said it looks as though women optimize socio-emotional goals

and make people feel good while men optimize instrumental goals either to win for themselves or to recognize merit where merit exists (Jones & Thibaut, 1958; Sampson, 1975; Deutsch, 1949; Kelley, et al, 1970). It looks as though "females are more concerned with the interpersonal situation than with winning" (Kahn, et al, 1971).

These sound like proper sterotypic behaviors for the sexes. A cross-national study of negotiation behavior, by Kelley (et al, 1970) found two major clusters: The interpersonal, cooperative cluster, that was also described as morally proper, good, weak, and passive, and the instrumental competitive cluster which was described as bad, (dishonest) active, and strong. With the exception of the gratuitous terms "good" and "bad" these clusters sound very much like the clusters of adjectives that emerged from the study of sex-role stereotypes done by Broverman (et al, 1969).

The general rule that men choose equity and women equality in resource allocation therefore fits the prevailing sterotype. Before asking why this happens, however, we want to introduce some exceptions to the rule, because they add more information.

Three studies have found the opposite results under special conditions. Lerner (1974) found girls choosing equity when he had a female experimenter working with children. I and two former students (Kidder, Bellettirie & Cohn, 1975) found that when given the opportunity to make their allocations privately and anonymously, men and women reversed their traditional patterns: men distributed rewards equally between themselves and a less deserving partner, and women distributed rewards equitably, giving themselves more than their partner. When they believed they would meet their partners again, however, and have to justify their allocations fact-to-face, they made the traditional

(stereotypic) allocations. And in a very recent study of how people would allocate punishments instead of rewards, Jerry Greenberg (1978) found a similar reversal. When he instructed men and women to assign penalties to offenders so as to rehabilitate them, he found men assigned harsh penalties and women lenient penalties when their choices were made public, but in private they did the opposite. Men became more lenient and women more strict. Our explanation for the reversal in private is that men and women were both permitted to step out of their roles, and could engage in sex-inappropriate behavior without scrutiny or censure.

Our explanation fits within the dramaturgical model (Goffman, 1959). It is not that men do not know how to behave cooperatively and compassionately and women competitively. It is rather that they give the required, stereotypic performances when they are on stage, and behave differently in private, back-stage.

By calling the front stage behavior "stereotypic", we do not imply that it is trivial. Stereotypic and rule-following behavior requires as much explanation as does its opposite. We therefore want to ask the next question: why do men and women behave so differently when it comes to winning, sharing, distributing resources?

We believe Lerner's model of the forms of justice offers some answers. That model predicts people will choose different forms of justice depending on whether they perceive other people as persons or as occupants of positions. Lerner's typology of forms of justice is more complex than this (see Table 1). For our purposes, we are focusing on his two center cells that depict a unit relationship.

TABLE 1
FORMS OF JUSTICE

Object of Perception	Perceived Relationship: Identity	Unit	Non-Unit
Person	Perception of 0 as self NEEDS	Perception of similarity, belonging with 0 PARITY (Equality)	Perceptions of contesting interests and personal differences related to the claims LAW, DARWINIAN JUSTICE
Position	Perception of self in 0's circumstances of need ENTITLEMENT, SOCIAL OBLIGATIONS	Perception of equivalence with 0 EQUITY	Scarce resources, with equally legitimate claims within the "rules" JUSTIFIED SELF-INTEREST

From Lerner, M. J. Journal of Social Issues, 1975, 31 (3), p.15

Those who perceive others as persons will opt for equality; those who perceive others as interchangeable occupants of positions will choose meritorious equity.

The logical question is: do women perceive others as persons and men perceive them as occupants of positions? We have some data that address this question.

The data come from a study of resource exchange and equity in intimate relationships. We realize there is a hot debate between those researchers (e.g. Walster, Walster & Berschrid, 1978) who believe it is appropriate to talk about equity in intimate relationships and others who find that either blasphemous or irrelevant (e.g. Rubin, 1973). We can circumvent this debate because our research does not require that we take sides. Instead we can simply ask: what resources do men and women perceive themselves as contributing to relationships? We need not know whether these contributions make or break a relationship; or whether they determine happiness. We want to know only what the resources are and whether they are the kinds of things people exchange with particular persons or with any appropriate occupant of a position.

We administered the scale that Elaine Walster and her colleagues developed (Traupmann, Utne & Walster, 1977) to obtain men's and women's perceptions of what they each contribute to a couple relationship and what they each receive. The scale taps 23 specific resources, such as intelligence, physical attractiveness, liking, understanding and concern, sexual pleasure, sexual fidelity, help with day-to-day tasks, and so on. We interviewed 16 men and 16 women, most of whom were in non-married couple relationships (and not the same relationships -- these were 32 people from separate couples, not pairs from 16 couples).

Marriage counselors probably have lots of unpublished data showing that each person in a relationship believes he or she contributes as much or more than the other. (This is also true of our data; few people perceive themselves as overbenefitted and underworked). What is of interest in our data, however are the differences in what men and women report as their contributions.

Women report themselves as contributing more in 5 areas than men do:

1) Liking the other person and showing it
2) Committing oneself to the other person and to the future of the relationship
3) Remembering special occasions: being thoughtful about sentimental things, such as remembering birthdays, anniversaries, and other special occasions
4) Showing affection: Being openly affectionate; touching, hugging, kissing
5) Day-to-day maintenance: contributing time and effort to household responsibilities such as grocery shopping, making dinner, cleaning, and car maintenance

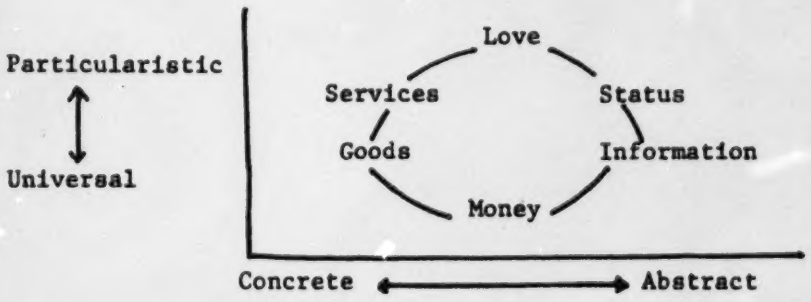
With the exception of the last item, all of the women's contributions are nurturant activities, with socio-emotional goals: liking the other, being thoughtful, showing affection, and committing oneself to the other. By contrast, the resources which men report contributing more than women fall into a different category. Men describe themselves as contributing more in the following 3 areas:

1) Finances: contributing income to a joint account

2) Physical attractiveness: being a physically attractive person

3) Intelligence: being an intelligent, informed person

We find it instructive to look at these data not from the point of view of how much men and women give and get in relationships, but what they give to the other. A classification scheme that helps us make sense of these data and tie them in with Lerner's typology of forms of justice is the following, from Uriel and Edna Foa (1974):



In this scheme, the universalistic-particularistic dimension corresponds to the distinction between treating others as occupants of positions versus treating them as persons. Universalistic resources are exchanged with people regardless of who they are: when we pay our money to a sales clerk it makes no difference who that clerk is, so long as he or she does the job right.

With particularistic resources, on the other hand, it matters a great deal who the recipient is. We don't give love or respect indiscriminately to just anyone who occupies a position -- we need to know whom we are loving or respecting.

(We want to point out that universalistic and particularistic differ not only in how closely they are tied to particular recipients but also in how closely they are tied to particualr donors. Just as we can give money to anyone, so can we receive it from anyone. Love, on the other hand, is given selectively and also received selectively. This means that the person who possesses and gives particularistic resources may have greater power than one who has and gives universalistic resources. If I can offer you understanding and thoughtfulness which you cannot get from just anyone, does that give me power? If you offer money, which anyone could provide, does that lessen the power of that resource? These are questions that lead us into other domains. We do not want to pursue them here, but we raise them because they highlight the power of resources that might otherwise seem like sentimental fluff by comparison with money and intelligence).

If we now return to the resources that men and women report contributing to intimate relationships, we find four of the five resources contributed by women are particularistic: liking, showing affection, remembering special occasions, and feeling committed are all near synonyms of "Love" in Foas' scheme. Only the day-to-day maintenance activities seem more universalistic, and if we call these "Services" they still fall closer to the particularistic end of the continuum.

The resources men report contributing, on the other hand, fall into different categories. Finances ("Money" in Foas' scheme) are clearly a universalistic resource, that can be exchanged with virtually anyone. Being well informed ("information" in Foas' scheme) also falls at the universalistic

end of the continuum; it is something one can do for almost anyone. Being physically attractive is more difficult to code. It is surprising and counter-intuitive that men should have reported contributing this more than women (does it mean men are the "sex objects"?) It does seem, however, like a resource that could be offered to and appreciated by anyone; it need not be tied to a particular other person.

We reach several conclusions with these data. The first is that men and women see themselves as contributing different types of resources to relationships. Women say they contribute particularistic resources -- resources directed toward particular persons; men say they contribute universalistic resources -- directed toward any occupant of some position. If these men and women are accurate reporters of their own behavior, they in fact have accumulated very different experiences in responding to others as either persons or occupants of positions.

A critic may say, but these are intimate relationships that we have studied, and one would expect people to exchange particularistic resources, especially in intimate relationships. That is true, and that makes it all the more remarkable that men exchanged universalistic resources.

If we return to our causal question: why do men and women use different forms of justice, different allocation rules, we see that our answer does not identify an original or primeval cause. We take data from one set of relationships -- intimate couple relationships -- and argue that even here men and women report giving resources that differ in an important way. Men give universalistic resources, that could be given to anyone in the right position; women report giving particularistic resources, that can be given only to the right persons. We link these data with Lerner's typology which predicts a preference

for equity when people perceive others as occupants of positions and equality when they perceive others as persons.

Do the differences we found mean that men and women normally possess different types of resources, and do these resources give them different perspectives? Or do they consequently practice giving in different ways. Is there a rehearsal effect? And where else might they rehearse different patterns of giving? We can speculate about Little League fields and doll corners, but we would rather see data on these.

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